

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-119. (canceled)

120. (currently amended) An apparatus for determining one or more physical properties of a rolled smoking article or filter rod, said rolled smoking article or filter rod having a longitudinal axis, said apparatus comprising:

an imaging device defining a field of view disposed along an optical axis, said imaging device imaging a rolled smoking article or filter rod in said field of view;

a positioning unit which positions a smoking article or filter rod in said field of view such that the longitudinal axis of the smoking article or filter rod is substantially orthogonal to the optical axis of the imaging device;

an illuminating unit which illuminates said field of view;

a rotating mechanism which rotates said smoking article or filter rod about its longitudinal axis in said field of view;

a processor which processes said image to determine one or more physical properties of a smoking article or filter rod in said field of view; and

a control unit which controls said processor, said control unit comprising a database, which database is constructed and arranged to store a predetermined nominal diameter of said rolled smoking article or filter rod, said control unit defining two laterally spaced regions of interest of said field of view corresponding to the nominal

width, each of which regions of interest encompasses all likely positions of a respective one of the opposite edges, and said control unit being configured to control the processor to process each image sample only within said two regions of interest to locate said opposite edges, wherein said processor repeatedly samples said image as said smoking article or filter rod is rotated by said rotating mechanism to obtain a plurality of image samples, wherein the processor processes each image sample to obtain a measurement of a diameter of said rolled smoking article or filter rod in each image sample, wherein the processor uses said measurements to obtain one or more physical properties of said rolled smoking article or filter rod selected from the mean diameter, ovality, circumference, roundness and shape of said rolled smoking article or filter rod, wherein said processor locates in each image sample two opposite edges of the rolled smoking article or filter rod in profile and calculates the distance between said opposite edges.

121-123. (canceled)

124. (currently amended) An apparatus for determining one or more physical properties of a rolled smoking article or filter rod, said rolled smoking article or filter rod having a longitudinal axis, said apparatus comprising:

an imaging device defining a field of view disposed along an optical axis, said imaging device imaging a rolled smoking article or filter rod in said field of view;

a positioning unit which positions a smoking article or filter rod in said field of view such that the longitudinal axis of the smoking article or filter rod is substantially orthogonal to the optical axis of the imaging device;

an illuminating unit which illuminates said field of view;

a rotating mechanism which rotates said smoking article or filter rod about its longitudinal axis in said field of view;

a processor which processes said image to determine one or more physical properties of a smoking article or filter rod in said field of view; and

a control unit which controls said processor, said control unit comprising a database which stores data indicating the axial direction of a rolled smoking article which is axially asymmetric such that said rolled smoking article is directional, said processor repeatedly sampling said image as said rolled smoking article is rotated by said rotating mechanism, and processing each sample to detect the position of a shadow cast by a longitudinal seam of an outer layer of the rolled smoking article, said outer layer being wrapped circumferentially around said rolled smoking article to overlap itself thereby to form said seam, thereby to determine the direction of wrapping of said outer layer relative to the direction of the rolled smoking article, wherein said processor repeatedly samples said image as said smoking article or filter rod is rotated by said rotating mechanism to obtain a plurality of image samples, wherein the processor processes each image sample to obtain a measurement of a diameter of said rolled smoking article or filter rod in each image sample, wherein the processor uses said measurements to obtain one or more physical properties of said rolled smoking article or filter rod selected from the mean diameter, ovality, circumference, roundness and shape of said rolled smoking article or filter rod.

125. (previously presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 124, wherein said database stores a nominal width of said rolled smoking article, and said control unit derives two laterally spaced regions of interest of said field of view based on said nominal width, each of said regions of interest encompassing all likely positions of said shadow depending on the direction of wrapping of said outer later, and controls said processor to detect the presence of said shadow only in one of said regions of interest.

126. (previously presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 124, wherein said illuminating unit comprises sidelights positioned obliquely relative to the optical axis to enhance the shadow cast by said seam.

127. (previously presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 124, wherein said processor determines the respective wrapping directions of two or more outer layers of a rolled smoking article, each of which outer layers is wrapped circumferentially around the rolled smoking article to overlap itself to form an axially extending seam.

128-130. (canceled)

131. (currently amended) A method of determining one or more physical properties of a rolled smoking article or filter rod, said rolled smoking article or filter rod having a longitudinal axis, said method comprising:

disposing a rolled smoking article or filter rod within a field of view defined along an optical axis of an imaging means such that the longitudinal axis of the smoking article or filter rod is substantially orthogonal to the optical axis of the imaging means;

illuminating said field of view;

imaging said rolled smoking article or filter rod within said field of view to form a digital image;

rotating said smoking article or filter rod about its longitudinal axis in said field of view;

repeatedly sampling said image as said smoking article or filter rod is rotated to obtain a plurality of image samples;

electronically processing each image sample to obtain a measurement of a diameter of said rolled smoking article or filter rod in each image sample;

electronically processing said measurements to obtain one or more physical properties of said rolled smoking article or filter rod selected from the mean diameter, ovality, circumference, roundness and shape of said rolled smoking article or filter rod;

determining the diameter of the rolled smoking article or filter rod in each image sample by processing the image sample to locate the two opposite edges of the rolled smoking article or filter rod in profile and calculating the distance between said opposite edges; and

processing each image sample within two predetermined, laterally spaced regions of interest of said field of view to locate said two opposite edges, which regions of interest are determined on the basis of the nominal diameter of the rolled smoking article or filter rod.

132-133. (canceled)

134. (currently amended) A method of determining one or more physical properties of a rolled smoking article or filter rod, said rolled smoking article or filter rod having a longitudinal axis, said method comprising:

disposing a rolled smoking article or filter rod within a field of view defined along an optical axis of an imaging means such that the longitudinal axis of the smoking article or filter rod is substantially orthogonal to the optical axis of the imaging means;

illuminating said field of view;

imaging said rolled smoking article or filter rod within said field of view to form a digital image;

rotating said smoking article or filter rod about its longitudinal axis in said field of view;

repeatedly sampling said image as said smoking article or filter rod is rotated to obtain a plurality of image samples;

electronically processing each image sample to obtain a measurement of a diameter of said rolled smoking article or filter rod in each image sample;

electronically processing said measurements to obtain one or more physical properties of said rolled smoking article or filter rod selected from the mean diameter, ovality, circumference, roundness and shape of said rolled smoking article or filter rod; and

determining an axial direction of a rolled smoking article which is axially asymmetric such that said rolled smoking article is directional and comprises at least one

outer layer which is wrapped circumferentially around said rolled smoking article to overlap itself thereby to form a longitudinal seam, and processing said image samples to determine the wrapping direction of said outer layer relative to the direction of said rolled smoking article.

135. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 134, wherein said image samples are processed to determine the position of said longitudinal seam by detecting the position of a shadow cast by said seam as the rolled smoking article rotates.

136. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 135, including processing each image sample to detect the presence of said shadow in two predetermined, laterally spaced regions of interest being determinative of the direction of wrapping of the outer layer, the regions of interest being determined on the basis of a predetermined nominal width of the rolled smoking article.

137. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 135, including illuminating said rolled smoking article obliquely to enhance the shadow cast by said seam.

138. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 135, wherein said rolled smoking article comprises two or more outer layers, each of which outer layers is wrapped circumferentially around the rolled smoking article to overlap itself to form an axially extending seam, and said image is processed to determine the wrapping direction of each outer layer relative to the direction of the rolled smoking article.

139-145. (canceled)